

America, Australia unite to test new weapon system

by Greg Davenport, AAC Public Affairs

EGLIN AFB, FLA. — The Air Force Research Laboratory Munitions Directorate Small Smart Bomb Program team at Eglin AFB, Florida, and the Royal Australian Air Force have combined forces in an effort to launch small smart bombs from the internal bay of an F-111 at supersonic speeds.

Members from the joint team were at Eglin's Air Armament Museum July 24, check-fitting an F-111 for bombing tests to be conducted in Australia later this year.

According to Ken Lockwood, Small Smart Bomb Australian Effort Program manager, this partnership is a perfect fit since the F-111 is part of the Royal Australian Air Force's air fleet.

"The F-111 is the only aircraft in the free world that can drop munitions at supersonic speeds from an internal weapons bay," Lockwood explained. "Currently the Air Force doesn't have any aircraft that can do that, but it will when the F-22 Raptor and Joint Strike Fighter are added to its arsenal."

Lockwood added that the test helps the Air Force identify and correct any problems the fighters may have when dropping munitions at supersonic speeds.

This project has been no small undertaking, said RAAF Flight Lt. Mark Cook, Small Smart Bomb Program manager. It has taken two years and involved hundreds of people and various squadrons on both sides of the planet.

"This project has involved large portions of the Royal Australian Air Force that has had to closely interface with our American counterparts, which is not an easy task," said Cook. "This is the first time the Royal Australian Air Force has undertaken a research flight test program."

New photometric software, which will be used to analyze the trajectory of munitions when they are released, is also being developed for the Australians — another first, Cook said. He added this project has been a major milestone for all involved.

Capt. Roy Glassco, Small Smart Bomb Australian Effort Program lead engineer, agrees. He said long workdays and the willingness to go the extra mile from both sides have yielded tremendous results.

"This whole project has been a big Team Eglin success story," Glassco said. "Everyone has bent over backwards to help us and make this the best project possible."

With the project's scheduled completion in November, the American members of the program will be heading down under shortly for the final phases.

RAAF Sgt. Bruce Rasmussen, aircraft systems techni-



A PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE — Royal Australian Air Force Flight Lt. Mark Cook (left), Small Smart Bomb Program manager, and Col. Norm Leonpacker (right), chief of the Munitions Directorate Assessment and Demonstration Division, look at the internal bay of an F-111. The two countries have united in an effort to launch small smart bombs from an F-111 at supersonic speeds.

cian and team member, said he is looking forward to seeing the results of all the teams' hard work and that he's learned a lot from working with his American counterparts — both technically and culturally.

"I learned that our two defense forces work in a similar way, so being in America wasn't that different from being in Australia," Rasmussen said. "We look forward to when the American forces come to our home and visit us." @